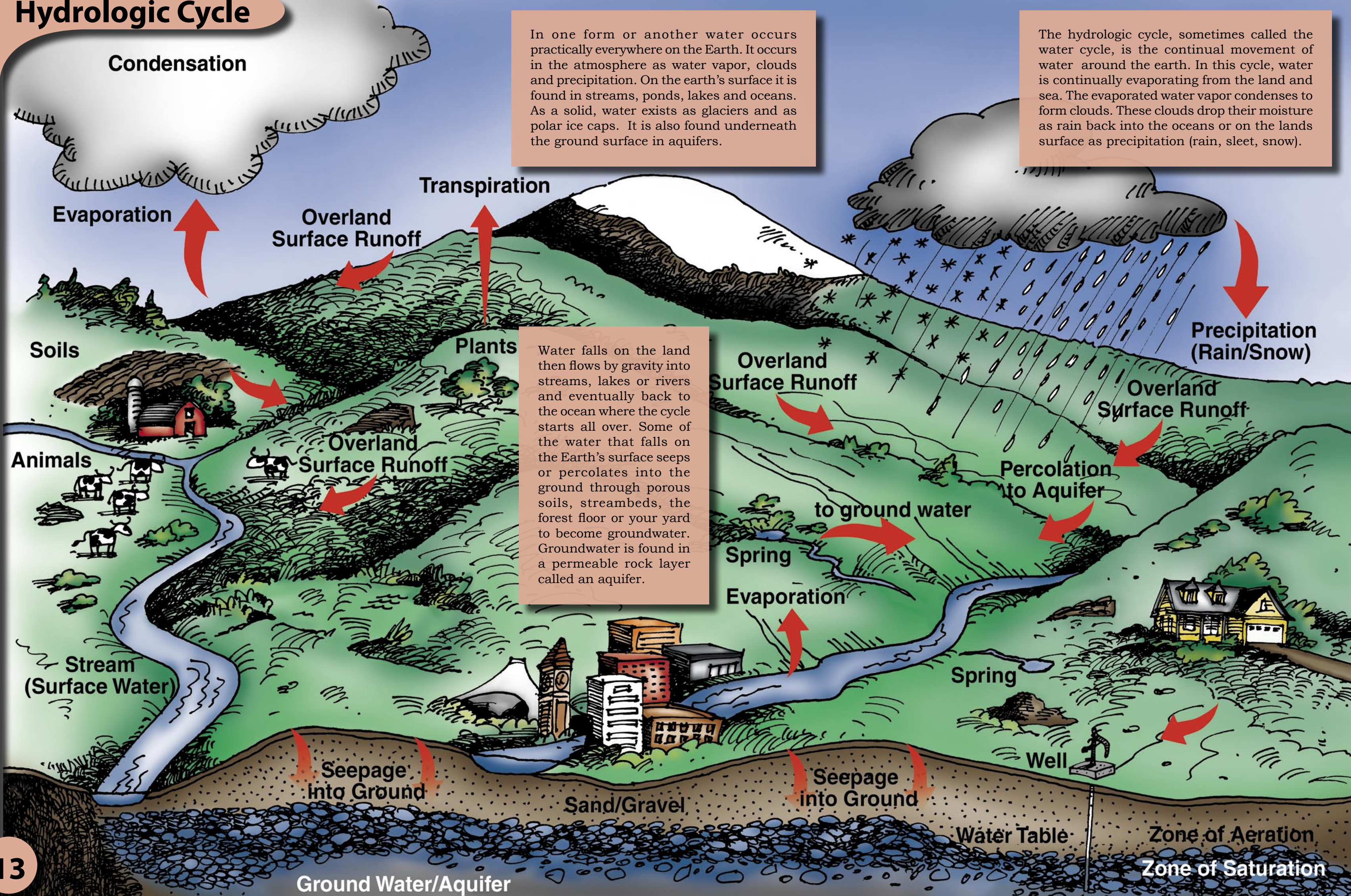


# Hydrologic Cycle



In one form or another water occurs practically everywhere on the Earth. It occurs in the atmosphere as water vapor, clouds and precipitation. On the earth's surface it is found in streams, ponds, lakes and oceans. As a solid, water exists as glaciers and as polar ice caps. It is also found underneath the ground surface in aquifers.

The hydrologic cycle, sometimes called the water cycle, is the continual movement of water around the earth. In this cycle, water is continually evaporating from the land and sea. The evaporated water vapor condenses to form clouds. These clouds drop their moisture as rain back into the oceans or on the lands surface as precipitation (rain, sleet, snow).

Water falls on the land then flows by gravity into streams, lakes or rivers and eventually back to the ocean where the cycle starts all over. Some of the water that falls on the Earth's surface seeps or percolates into the ground through porous soils, streambeds, the forest floor or your yard to become groundwater. Groundwater is found in a permeable rock layer called an aquifer.